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Baker-Polito Administration Announces Launch of Public Awareness Campaign: “RESPECTfully”

The campaign aims to promote healthy relationships among young people in order to prevent sexual assault and domestic violence

BOSTON – Governor Charlie Baker, Lt. Governor Karyn Polito and Secretary of Health and Human Services Marylou Sudders, joined legislators and advocates today to announce the launch of “RESPECTfully,” a statewide public awareness and prevention campaign to promote healthy relationships among middle and high school students. The campaign stems from the work of the Governor’s Council to Address Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence, led by Lt. Governor Karyn Polito, which has been working to reduce the number of individuals who experience sexual and domestic violence in their lives.

“The ‘RESPECTfully’ campaign builds upon the hard work that Lt. Governor Polito and the Council have done to address prevention, protect Massachusetts’ youth and expand programs for survivors,” **said Governor Charlie Baker**. “I am proud to launch this initiative to provide children in Massachusetts with the tools they need to succeed and encourage parents and youth serving organizations to engage and promote the campaign throughout the Commonwealth.”

“This prevention campaign’s key message is that everyone deserves respect, honesty and open communication and I am grateful for the hard work of the Council, the subcommittee, the youth advisory group and our partners in the Legislature in its development,” **said Lt. Governor Karyn Polito, Chair of the Governor’s Council to Address Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence**. “The ‘RESPECTfully’ campaign aims to ensure that teens across the Commonwealth are well-equipped to navigate new and developing relationships and friendships in safe and healthy ways as another step to continue working towards ending sexual assault and domestic violence here in Massachusetts.”

“RESPECTfully” is the first public awareness campaign related to preventing sexual assault and domestic violence in Massachusetts in almost 20 years, and will officially launch on social media and on platforms

across the state on May 26, 2019. The Governor's Council to Address Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence created a subcommittee of experts which conducted extensive formative research to understand the issues and pressures that young people are facing with regard to friendships and relationships, as well as ensuring that the message developed was appropriate and engaging.

In addition to the subcommittee of experts, a youth advisory group from across the state was convened, which included a diverse mix of race, ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation in order to continue to learn from the youth as the campaign developed.

"Domestic violence and sexual assault is a public health issue that requires a strong prevention effort focused on awareness of what constitutes healthy relationships," **said Secretary of Health and Human Services Marylou Sudders**. "Today's youth have the power to set a new standard."

The "RESPECTfully" campaign aims to:

- Target youth between the ages of 12-18, as well as their parents, caregivers, and adults involved in youth-serving organizations.
- Increase awareness about what constitutes a healthy relationship by defining characteristics using examples of acceptable vs. unacceptable behaviors.
- Focus on promoting healthy relationships and confronting the issues around healthy boundaries and behaviors while communicating key components around respect and honesty through short videos with modern animations conveying a clear message on social media platforms that teens are using every day.
- Encourage parents, caregivers and adults in youth serving organizations like educators, mentors and school resource officers among others to have open, honest, non-judgmental and continuous conversations with youth about respect in friendships and romantic relationships in order to help to lower the risk for teens experiencing unhealthy or abusive relationships.
- Help teens identify the escalating behaviors that lead to unhealthy or unsafe relationships and remove themselves from those relationships.

"This campaign will help young people across Massachusetts to build healthy relationships, whether platonic or romantic," **said Senator Jason Lewis**. "Healthy relationships are vitally important to the mental and physical development and wellbeing of our young people. I'm very pleased to support this exciting campaign."

"Last session, as Chair of the Committee on Public Health, I joined forces with Lieutenant Governor Polito and Senator Lewis to build a foundation for state leadership to address domestic violence and sexual assault as a public health issue. In every corner of our state, we know the toll taken by domestic violence and sexual assault and as elected officials, we saw we could begin changing that story," **said Representative Kate Hogan**. "This session, I am proud to bring the legislature to the table as a partner in prevention. As lawmakers and government officials, advocacy groups and school districts, our shared goal is to reach students where they are and share the importance of understanding respect in relationships."

"JDI was proud to be a member of the subcommittee working on this campaign. The message to young people from all backgrounds and identities to approach all relationships," **said Jane Doe Inc. Executive Director Debra Robbin**. "'RESPECTfully' resonates with me and other educators and advocates who

understand the importance of focusing on values in order to ultimately prevent teen dating and sexual violence and promote healthy relationships built on trust, equity, and, yes, respect.”

“My time working as a member of the Youth Advisory Council has taught me that a healthy relationship has about 7 components: honesty, communication, trust, respect, understanding, love and teamwork,” **said Youth Advisory Council Member Emma Demerath.** “I’m so honored to be a part of a campaign that pledges to educate kids on healthy relationships in order to prevent domestic violence in their futures.”

The campaign is funded by \$500,000 secured in the FY 2019 budget. The campaign spots will be on social media channels such as Instagram, Snapchat and YouTube beginning next week and run through October and will include:

- Two spots dedicated to friendships, aimed at middle schoolers
- Four spots dedicated to intimate partner relationships, aimed at high schoolers
- Ads will run for 20-30 seconds on social media platforms
- The campaign assets will identify an unhealthy behavior and propose a resolution in a positive, empowering manner on topics such as drama in friendships, name-calling, intense or obsessive relationships, controlling relationships, isolation or jealousy in relationships and betrayal in relationships.

The “RESPECTfully” campaign images will also appear on transit stations, Registry of Motor Vehicle locations, MassPort Digital Panels, convenience stores and billboards throughout the state.

For more information on the campaign or to download the material, visit www.mass.gov/RESPECTfully.

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